

MINUTES
SENATE STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, February 25, 2026

TIME: 8:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Guthrie, Vice Chairman Bernt, Senators Anthon, Harris, Toews, Den Hartog, Adams, Shippy, and Ruchti

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: None

NOTE: The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

CONVENED: **Chairman Guthrie** called the meeting of the Senate State Affairs Committee (Committee) to order at 8:00 a.m.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Shippy** moved to approve the Minutes of February 18, 2026. **Senator Adams** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT VOTE: **Committee Vote on the Gubernatorial Appointment of Cally Younger as Administrator of the Office of Energy and Mineral Resources** to serve a term commencing March 17, 2025 and continuing at the pleasure of the Governor. **Senator Adams** moved to send the Gubernatorial Appointment of Cally Younger as Administrator of the Office of Energy and Mineral Resources to the floor with the recommendation that she be confirmed by the Senate. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

RS 33487C1 **Balanced Budget.** **Senator Cook** explained that this resolution called for Idaho's federal delegation to support United States Senators from Idaho Mike Crapo and James Risch on their proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution to balance the budget. **Senator Cook** shared that the Senators brought this amendment forward in 2023 and believed it could move forward in the Senate with the expressed support of the Idaho Legislature.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Adams** asked Senator Cook how this differed from the other balanced budget legislation that was currently in the Idaho Senate. **Senator Cook** explained the difference was that this was a letter to Congress to support Idaho's Senators and that this method had been successful 27 times in the past which led him to believe it could work again.

MOTION: **Senator Adams** moved to send **RS 33487C1** to print. **Senator Ruchti** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

RS 33475 **Treasury Trust Bonds.** **Senator Hart** said this memorial would support a proposal made by a woman named Dr. Judy Shelton that the Idaho Treasury issue United States bonds backed by gold. **Senator Hart** believed by doing this it would be a step in the right direction for the United States to tie our monetary system back to gold. He shared other states like Utah had done this successfully.

MOTION: **Senator Adams** moved to send **RS 33475** to print. **Senator Toews** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

- RS 33451** **State Treasurer, Gold and Silver. Senator Hart** explained that this legislation would authorize the State Treasurer to invest money from the Idaho Money Fund in gold and silver. He said this bill had been brought forward before but was vetoed by the Governor due to concerns about the fiscal impact. **Senator Hart** believed this would allow the State Treasurer to diversify its investment portfolio.
- MOTION:** **Senator Shippy** moved to send **RS 33451** to print. **Senator Anthon** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.
- RS 33484** **Education, Strategic Performance Plans. Senator Lent** explained over the last few years he had looked at how Idaho could capitalize on carve-outs and improvements that had been made to the charter school system. He explained this legislation would replace continuous improvement plans with strategic performance plans in order to carry out successes found within the charter school system to the public school system.
- DISCUSSION:** **Senator Adams** asked if it was anticipated that this legislation would return to the Senate Education Committee if it were to be printed. **Senator Lent** said yes. **Senator Adams** asked Senator Lent about the current framework for multiyear plans. **Senator Lent** explained that the current framework would be mirrored in the creation of the new framework and believed this would move public schools in a positive direction. He believed this legislation would allow schools with high performance to have more freedom over their resources in order to allocate resources and attention to those that are under-performing.
- MOTION:** **Senator Den Hartog** moved to send **RS 33484** to print. **Senator Harris** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.
- RS 33510** **Education Funding Formula. Senator Lent** shared that over the years there had been an attempt to modernize Idaho's funding formula. He shared that this resolution would direct the Idaho Department of Education to move forward with an updated funding formula that would be report to the Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee.
- MOTION:** **Senator Den Hartog** moved to send **RS 33510** to print. **Senator Toews** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.
- RS 33492** **College Athletics. Senator Adams** explained that this joint memorial would focus on college athletic programs. He said this legislation was in response to repeated calls from both the President and athletic programs across the country to create structure, an even-playing field, and protect future generations of college sports.
- MOTION:** **Senator Harris** moved to send **RS 33492** to print. **Senator Toews** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.
- RS 33472** **Driving, Right-Hand Lane. Senator Harris** said that this problem was brought to his attention by constituents surrounding the dangers of utilizing passing lanes and remaining in them at a slow speed. He said he consulted Idaho State Police on this issue and believed this legislation would help maintain the flow of traffic.
- MOTION:** **Senator Adams** moved to send **RS 33472** to print. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.
- RS 33473** **Campaign Finance. Senator Harris** shared that this legislation revised and reorganized a statute from 1974 regarding Campaign Financing. He said much had changed since that statute was enacted and this would improve reporting clarity and transparency requirements related to the valid initiative process and referendum campaigns. **Senator Harris** explained it would also add additional pre-primary and pre-general election campaign finance reports as well as update contribution and expenditure limitations.

MOTION: **Senator Bernt** moved to send **RS 33473** to print. **Senator Adams** seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Bernt** commended Senator Harris for having brought this legislation forward to address an issue he believed to be top of mind for many people.

VOICE VOTE: The motion to send **RS 33473** to print carried by **voice vote**.

S 1320 **STATE CONTROLLER- Amends existing law to remove obsolete provisions.** **Senator Blaylock** explained that this was language cleanup and language repeal dealing with the Business Information Infrastructure Fund that was in place.

MOTION: **Senator Den Hartog** moved to send **S 1320** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Harris** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

S 1321 **STATE CONTROLLER- Amends existing law to revise provisions regarding reporting requirements and to establish provisions regarding noncompliance.** **Senator Blaylock** explained that this legislation would expand on H 358 (2025) which required state agencies to provide the State Controller's Office with information related to contracts and agreements they entered into. She said this legislation would expand on procedure and time lines when agencies failed to report.

MOTION: **Senator Toews** moved to send **S 1321** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Bernt** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

S 1322 **ELECTIONS- Amends existing law to add certain requirements for an affidavit in lieu of personal identification.** **Senator Lenney** said that this was an election security bill that would require voters to provide their date of birth or driver's license number for verification by poll workers before being granted a voter affidavit. He believed this would make the current affidavit stronger and that this was a step in the right direction for voter integrity.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Toews** asked Senator Lenney why providing a date of birth would help prevent fraudulent voting. **Senator Lenney** explained he believed that those who want to act fraudulently will do so regardless, but that being asked for a date of birth and drivers license number would deter fraud. **Senator Shippy** posed a hypothetical to clarify with Senator Lenney that voters could use this method if they knew their driver's license numbers but didn't have their physical card with them. **Senator Lenney** said that was correct, just knowing the number would be enough.

TESTIMONY: **Phil McGrane**, Idaho Secretary of State, testified in support of **S 1322**. He explained that he worked with Senator Lenney on this legislation and thought that it addressed concerns he heard frequently regarding voter identification laws. **Secretary McGrane** shared that he believed this heightened safeguards for elections while still allowing those who show up without identification to the polls to cast their vote. He also shared he addressed concerns clerks in rural counties who would not have the cellular service required to call and verify this information. He explained they would be coming up with solutions for the few affected areas. **Secretary McGrane** explained that in order to register to vote in Idaho, a valid identification must be presented, so requiring identification on election day was just another safety measure.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Toews** expressed concerns about including date of birth in addition to the driver's license number and asked Secretary McGrane why it was useful and if he was open to removing that language. **Secretary McGrane** explained he would be hesitant to remove that as someone's date of birth was not considered common enough knowledge for it to pose a fraud risk. **Secretary McGrane** acknowledged Senator Toews' point and emphasized what **Senator Lenney** explained about this being a deterrent as well as a safety measure. **Secretary McGrane** believed this legislation was a step towards tightening the voter identification verification process while keeping an option for people without physical identification that still wanted to vote.

MOTION: **Senator Shippy** moved to send **S 1322** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Ruchti** shared he would vote in favor of the motion and explained over the last few sessions he noticed there had been a dismissive attitude towards the legitimacy of affidavits. He emphasized that affidavits are a sworn oath by someone that the facts in the affidavit are true and that they are relied upon often, especially in court. **Senator Ruchti** said that the legitimacy of affidavits should not be questioned.

VOICE VOTE: The motion to send **S 1322** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation carried by **voice vote**.

S 1296 **CRIMINAL TRESPASS- Amends existing law to provide for criminal trespass of a church and to provide a penalty.** **Senator Anthon** explained there had been a recent increase in church service disruptions, where people had been purposely storming and interrupting proceedings with the argument that they were exercising their First Amendment right to freedom of speech. **Senator Anthon** said this was not legitimate justification for that kind of behavior and emphasized the First Amendment right to freedom of speech's time, place, and manner restrictions. He said this legislation would further define trespassing in Idaho and enhance punishments for those interrupting church services.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Bernt** thanked Senator Anthon for sponsoring this legislation and asked him to explain why these definitions and enhancements for trespassers did not extend to businesses and other public spaces. **Senator Anthon** explained that there were currently Idaho Code provisions that allow businesses to deem someone a trespasser and put a stop to disruptive behavior but that church services differ because it could not be anticipated in their case. He said there was not currently Idaho Code that protected churches from these actions. **Senator Adams** asked Senator Anthon how difficult he thought it would be to prove the intent behind the trespassers' actions in this kind of case. **Senator Anthon** said he did not believe intent in these cases would be hard to prove as the action spoke for itself.

TESTIMONY: **Clint Sandusky**, of Boise, Idaho, testified in support of **S 1296**. **Mr. Sandusky** shared he was a retired police officer and law enforcement instructor and had worked on several church security teams. He explained there had been an increase in the amount of trespassers at church services and that most of these instances were handled internally, unless law enforcement involvement was necessary. **Mr. Sandusky** believed this legislation would give law enforcement the ability to track these trespass instances and hoped this would prevent the problem from continuing.

TESTIMONY: **Grace Howat**, representing the Idaho Family Policy Center, testified in support of **S 1296**. **Ms. Howat** shared several instances of this issue from across the country and believed the First Amendment right to freedom of speech does not cover this kind of behavior. She said that Idaho must remain a place where Christians are free to worship without fear of disruption.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Bernt** shared that just a few years ago, someone came to his home and spray-painted the word "Nazi" on his garage door. He asked **Ms. Howat** why she believed this legislation should be focused on places of worship and not extend punishment enhancements to all trespassers. **Ms. Howat** stated she believed there were several pieces of legislation already in place that target trespassers on private and public property and that this would focus on places of worship due to the recent increase in threats and disruptive acts in churches across the country.

MOTION: **Senator Ruchti** moved to send **S 1296** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Harris** seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Ruchti** shared he supported this motion because he believed the bill was well-written and appreciated how it protected the First Amendment right to freedom of religion. He explained he often saw all rights written in the First Amendment equated but some First Amendment rights receive greater protections. **Senator Ruchti** felt it was appropriate to address them separately and appreciated the specificity of this legislation. **Senator Bernt** said he supported the motion but wished the legislation went further in addressing targeted violence and trespassing in more than just places of worship.

VOICE VOTE: The motion to send **S 1296** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation carried by **voice vote**.

HCR 28 **STATE AFFAIRS- State findings of the Legislature and asks Idahoans to recognize a day of fasting and prayer on March 1, 2026.** **Senator Den Hartog** explained that this concurrent resolution was brought forward by the Majority Leader of the House of Representatives Jason Monks and it called on Idahoans to fast and pray for virtuous solutions on March 1, 2026. **Senator Den Hartog** said this specifically asked Idahoans to pray for snow and rain as Idaho was having a mild winter.

TESTIMONY: **Grace Howat**, representing the Idaho Family Policy Center, testified in support of **HCR 28**. **Ms. Howat** believed that people were fully dependent on the God of the Bible and explained that days for prayer and fasting had been declared in Idaho when intervention was needed.

TESTIMONY: **Matthew Jensen**, of Boise, Idaho, testified in support of **HCR 28**. **Mr. Jensen** said that confusion and hatred were at an all-time high and Americans had survived tough battles before, but the conditions of the US and the world were worsening. **Mr. Jensen** believed that if it were accommodating to most work schedules, then more Idahoans would have shown up to testify in support of this legislation as well.

MOTION: **Senator Harris** moved to send **HCR 28** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Bernt** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

PASSED THE GAVEL: Chairman Guthrie passed the gavel to Vice Chairman Bernt.

H 539

IDAHO ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE ACT- Amends existing law to establish provisions regarding temporary rules and to revise provisions regarding temporary rules. **Chairman Guthrie** explained that this legislation would strengthen legislative oversight of temporary rules by limiting the circumstances in which temporary rules were put in place. He shared this legislation would require the Governor to release a statement to explain the reason for the implementation of temporary rules to prevent agencies from utilizing temporary rules without the knowledge and consent of the Governor.

TESTIMONY:

Russ Hendricks, representing the Idaho Farm Bureau, testified in support of **H 539**. He explained that this legislation was brought forward last year and may have been familiar to the Senators. He agreed with and emphasized the explanation given by Chairman Guthrie and asked the Committee for their support in moving it forward.

MOTION:

Senator Den Hartog moved to send **H 539** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Harris** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

ADJOURNED:

There being no further business at this time, **Vice Chairman Bernt** adjourned the meeting at 9:03 a.m.

Senator Guthrie
Chair

Abby Rowe
Secretary